

Author Steven Brust replies to petition of writers against Trump

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Science fiction and fantasy writer Steven Brust was asked to sign a petition being circulated among US writers opposed to the candidacy of Donald Trump for US president. Brust wrote the following reply, which we are reposting here with his permission.

I've received a request to sign this petition of writers against Trump. There can be no question of my opposition to Trump and all he stands for: his appeal to ignorance and bigotry, his threats to carry out war crimes, his efforts to generate hatred of immigrants, his overt jingoism. I would go so far as to say that Trump is the first major politician of my lifetime who can be accurately characterized as, if not a fascist, certainly fascistic; this becomes more clear as we see him whipping up his supporters to commit acts of violence against those who oppose him.

Nevertheless, I cannot, in good conscience, sign the petition. When I read, "Because we believe that knowledge, experience, flexibility, and historical awareness are indispensable in a leader," I am forced to ask: a leader of what, leading for what purpose, in whose interest, and in what direction? This indicates to me that the petition is not merely against Trump, but can and will be used to support someone who, to those using the petition, would be a better choice to, "speak for the United States, to lead its military, to maintain its alliances, or to represent its people."

And here is the problem. When you say, "lead its military ... represent its people," this contains an implication that it is possible to do both. In other words, that the Bush-Obama war, with its war crimes and murders of civilians (openly and publicly supported by Senator Sanders, and with which Secretary Clinton has been actively complicit) is the will of the American people, which I cannot and will not accept. In addition, it implies that this war is not the problem, but rather the problem is *how it is carried out*.

I have only respect for those of my colleagues who are horrified by Trump and what he represents—how can we not be? Furthermore, I am always encouraged by signs that we as writers are aware of and involved with the political questions that matter so deeply to our future. And yet it seems to me that we need to take a closer and more critical look at what is being done here. It is all very well to be "anti-Trump." But if being anti-Trump means support for the Democratic Party whose administration has overseen, in the last eight years, more deportations (especially of children) than any other administration in history, has encouraged and justified the murder of the poor and minorities by police, has created the greatest income disparity in history, has continued illegal rendition and torture, has bombed more civilians than Bush dreamed of, has retreated before the religious right's attacks on freedom at every opportunity, then one must ask: why are we doing this?

There is nothing in the petition that prevents it from being used to rally support for Clinton or Sanders, both of whom are defenders of capitalism. But it is capitalism itself, and its insoluble crisis, that has produced Trump as a staph infection might produce a boil. However painful and unsightly the boil, the problem is the infection. This petition is part of what seems to be a growing "anti-Trump" movement, and of course, the impulse behind this movement is laudable and healthy. But if it becomes a movement in support of the Democratic Party, and especially of Hillary Clinton who is close to sewing up the nomination, then it is useless at best, and will play into Trump's "anti-establishment" narrative at worst.

You appeal to me as a writer. Yet isn't our highest goal as writers to lay bare the contradictions that are concealed within the relations of everyday life? To denounce Trump without also denouncing the other

candidates of the capitalist parties—that is, the parties that support wars of aggression, the militarization of the police, domestic spying, persecution of whistle-blowers, torture, and war crimes, all of which have been carried out by both major parties, and none of which have been opposed by any major candidate—is not to reveal the truth, but to conceal it.

And to those who insist that some Democratic politician is a “lesser evil” and (as people so often do) bring up Hitler and Nazism, it is worth remembering that Hitler was defeated in the election of 1932 by a coalition organized by those who thought anyone was better than Hitler. The Nazis, in other words, were “lesser eviled” all the way into power. If when someone says Trump you hear Hitler, then when someone says Clinton you ought to hear Hindenberg.

No, I do not support Trump. Nor do I support the imperialist wars, militarized police, domestic spying, movements toward war against Russia, provocations against China, restrictions on reproductive rights, poisoning of water supplies, and attacks on basic rights that are the legacy of the Democratic Party as well as the Republican. Are the two parties different? Certainly. They represent different sections of the ruling class, and different approaches for how best to preserve and defend capitalism, and the very bitterness of the conflict between them indicates how deep runs the crisis, how insoluble are the problems. But I am not interested in picking which candidate will do a better job of preserving the system that is oppressing and murdering my brothers and sisters. If you offer me that as a choice, I vote “no.”

I believe that only the unity of working people, immigrants, the unemployed, the poor, and all of the oppressed, fighting under a socialist program directly against the two parties of big business, can provide any sort of way forward. The candidacy of Donald Trump represents all of the filth, degeneracy, and despair of capitalism in its death agony; the Democratic Party candidates who oppose him represent different policies to accomplish the same goal, and it is the goal itself, continuing the system of war and oppression, that I oppose.

In November, I will be voting for Jerry White and Niles Niemuth of the Socialist Equality Party. I urge everyone who is as appalled as I am by, not only Trump, but by the criminal and inhuman system that

produced him, to do the same.

Steven Brust



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